

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

- 1. (Currently Amended)** A stereoscopic observation system comprising:
a stereoscopic optical unit provided with a pair of objectives for stereoscopic observation and optical devices corresponding to the respective objectives;
a stereoscopic camera connected to the stereoscopic optical unit, and operable to pick up optical images formed by the optical devices, at least one of the stereoscopic camera and the stereoscopic optical unit serving as an instrument to be supported;
a support unit which supports the instrument; and
a rotation mechanism incorporated in the support unit, the rotation mechanism having a an independent rotary shaft substantially parallel to an optical axis of the objectives, the rotation mechanism supporting the instrument such that the instrument can rotate about an axis of the independent rotary shaft;
the support unit comprising at least one movable portion and an engagement unit adapted to disengageably engage with the at least one movable portion, the movable portion adapted to allow a movement of the instrument when the engagement unit is mechanically disengaged from the movable portion, and the rotation mechanism comprising the independent rotary shaft operable to rotate without allowing a non-rotational movement of the instrument even when the engagement unit is engaged with the at least one movable portion.

- 2. (Previously Presented)** The system according to claim 1, the rotation mechanism comprising a limiting pressure unit of a frictional resistance type structured to apply a frictional force to the rotary shaft when the instrument is rotated, thereby limiting rotation of the instrument.

- 3. (Canceled)**

- 4. (Currently Amended)** The system according to claim 1, wherein the independent rotary shaft of the rotation mechanism is substantially coaxial with the optical unit.

5. **(Previously Presented)** The system according to claim 1, wherein the support unit incorporates an additional rotation mechanism.

6. **(Original)** The system according to claim 1, wherein the optical unit is a stereoscopic endoscope.